

This Plato has the answers

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Local Heroes

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Menlo-Atherton coach has memorabilia for the ages

SO YOU WANT TO find out which San Mateo County prep football team won the Peninsula Athletic League in 1940.

Or maybe it's those three guys from San Mateo High who made the all-PAL team in 1923.

Their names are right on the tip of your tongue, if you could only remember.

Well, these, as well as thousands of other minute details, can be found in the extensive library of Menlo-Atherton High cross country coach Plato Yanicks.

Yanicks, who graduated from Palo Alto High in 1949, has compiled newspaper clippings, magazines, media guides and programs from virtually every sport.

His collection has gotten so large that he's filled not one, but two homes with information.

"A lot of people think I'm only interested in track and cross country," Yanicks said. "Actually, I like all sports."

And it shows.

He has records dating back to 1897 in some sports and that's just high school stuff.

He's also got college and professional sports catalogued in scrapbooks that take up volumes.

YANICKS, WHO GREW UP in the Marina District of San Francisco before moving with his family to Palo Alto, got interested in collecting because of his fondness for Glenn Davis and Felix "Doc" Blanchard of Army football fame in the 1940s.

"They were going crazy in the early '40s and I started collecting items about them," Yanicks said. "They are my all-time favorites. You can say they influenced my whole life."

It just seemed natural to expand his collection from Davis and Blanchard to every sport.

His collection got a big boost from Stanford, which was going to throw away thousands of newspapers from the early part of the century.

Yanicks rescued the newspapers (which were put on microfilm by Stanford) and carefully sorted them out according to sport.

He's also gotten material from garage sales and book sales.

"I've also gotten a lot of help from the local newspapers, especially from Denny Anderson (a sports reporter for the now-defunct Redwood City Tribune who now toils in Hawaii)," Yanicks said. "They made sure I got whatever I needed."

Yanicks has each sport organized by year for easy reference. A fanatic could spend days poring over information.

"When I retire, I'm going to try to set up a sports library," Yanicks said. "There's so much to do that I'll need a lot of time."

YANICKS HIMSELF has storied history.

After graduating from San Jose State in 1953, he was going to coach basketball. That was until he took a graduate course at Stanford from track coach Payton Jordan.

"He has so much charisma and was so dynamic, I felt I could make something out of nothing," Yanicks said of his conversion to track. "I felt I didn't need great talent to win."



Photo courtesy of Plato Yanicks archive

Plato Yanicks with his mother, circa 1948.